

THE GENTILES BLEST

A SERMON

By Mister JAMES WELLS

At the New Surrey Tabernacle, Wansley Street

Volume 11 Number 561

(Never Before Printed)

“And the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they in all vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it.” Isaiah 19:21

THE ancient nations were many of them representatives of the Gentile world at large; and therefore we must not take the text literally as a promise to persons that lived merely in Egypt; we must take it spiritually, and understand the Egyptians here mystically to mean the Gentiles at large; and that there shall be gathered out of these Egyptians or Gentiles, a people that shall know the Lord, that shall do sacrifice and oblation, and shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it. The apostle sometimes speaks of all the Gentiles by the word “Greek,” “to the Jew first, and afterward to the Greek.” The Gentiles are thus nominated by the names of these ancient nations. Babylon itself, as you are aware, has its antitype in the world; and yet in this mystic Babylon the Lord has a people; to whom he says, “Come out of her, my people.” He calls one and another by his grace, and thus fulfils the promise of his word.

We have, from our text down to the end of this chapter, the same doctrine which is contained in the 11th of the Romans, where you read of the Jews being rejected. They disbelieved in God's truth, and yet called themselves children of God; but then the Savior did not call them children of God; he nominated them from a very different quarter. Because of their unbelief, therefore, they were broken off; and the Gentiles came in, as it were, to take their place. Just so in our text the Egyptians are represented in one sense as taking the place of the Israelites. “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you,” said the Savior, “and given to the Gentiles.”

We may condense our text into two parts. First, *the saving knowledge of the Lord*; “the Egyptians shall know the Lord.” Secondly, *their consecration to God*; “they shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it.”

First, *the saving knowledge of the Lord*. You observe it stands in a positive form; “the Egyptians shall know the Lord.” Let us see how these Egyptians, these Gentiles, were to know the Lord. They were to know the Lord by their being made to feel first their need of a Savior, and by their being

made to cry unto God by faith in that Savior. Hence, in the preceding verses, it is said of these same people, "They shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors." We all feel encouraged by prayer being put into that form. Now when a sinner is made sensible of his state, he does not see the depth or the full stubbornness of the disease at the first, much less does he see the remedy; but he becomes an unhappy man; he feels that he is a sinner; he feels that death, judgment, and eternity are at hand; he feels that the Judge stands before the door; he feels that his existence without God's mercy is a curse, and he begins, therefore, inwardly to sigh and cry to God. He says to himself, What am I without God? Why, if I am not interested in the mercy of God, and if God does not have mercy upon me, a very few years will carry me away like a flood; for if we reckon every morning to be a kind of wave, such a flood is irresistible. Tide and time, as we say, stay for no man. Time will go on; old age, if we should be favored to live to old age, will come; there is no stopping it. The Lord lays this home to the heart of such a one, and then he catches a little distant view of the Lord Jesus Christ. "They shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a Savior, and a great one, and he shall deliver them." And by degrees they begin to see that Jesus Christ came into the world to answer that end which they just now are brought to feel their need of; that he came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. Then, says such an one, I have divine authority to hope that I shall be saved; because Jesus Christ came to save sinners; I have divine authority to hope that he will save me, because it is written that "he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him."

Now there were a people, and I suppose there is a people now, to whom the Lord said that he would laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear came. "When your fear comes as desolation, and your destruction comes as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish comes upon you, then shall they call upon me, and I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; they would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof;" that is, there were a people that were to be mocked and held in contempt by the Most High, whose agonies, whose anguish, whose distress, he would not listen to. Let us now try, as the solemnity of such a scripture demands, to understand it. If you go to the 8th of Isaiah, you will meet with these words; and if you can understand them, that will show you at once who the people are. "To the law and to the testimony;" that is, to the law of faith, and to the testimony of Christ; "if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Then it goes on to speak of those that did not speak according to this word and this testimony. "They shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry; and it shall come to pass that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward." Who was it that accounted Jesus Christ accursed? Who was it that anathematized and crucified Jesus Christ? Why, the Jews; and yet they looked upward; they expected God to appear and repel the Roman armies, protect their city and their temple, and deliver them. But God mocked at their fear, he laughed at their calamity; and thus, were the solemn words in that department fulfilled. You will thus see that they called upon God for mercy while their hearts were full of enmity against Christ. "They shall curse their King and their God;" Christ was their King nationally, and Christ was their God nationally, in that temporal covenant under which they were; and when their King and their God came unto them, they received him not. But there were some among them, taught by the Spirit of God, that did receive this King, that did receive this God; and "to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even unto them" that treated him very differently from those who cursed him, "even unto them that believed on his name." This is where Nathanael was when he said, "Master, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel."

He became Nathanael's King and Nathanael's God. But the others, the Lord laughed at their calamity, and mocked when their fear came. This is the meaning of it, historically speaking. But we must come closer still. Now, in the first place, Abel called upon God, and he called upon God acceptably. Just mark the preceding verse to our text. "They shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a Savior." So, they are crying out for a Savior, and when this Savior is revealed they believe in him, they build on him as the foundation of their hope, and are taught and made to say, "There is none other name under heaven whereby we can be saved." Abel thus believed. But Cain, while he excluded the excellent sacrifice, the atonement and righteousness of Christ, had no divine authority to conclude that the Lord would have mercy upon him, and that his sins would be forgiven. And even after he had slain his brother, Cain still remained in the dark, still remained in enmity. He cried out that his punishment was greater than he could bear; yet, not being enlightened to believe in Jesus Christ, or to receive God's truth, nor expressing any desire to do so, God laughed at his calamity, and mocked when his fear came. Thus, unless our enmity against God's Christ and God's truth be slain, our prayers cannot be heard. An apparent exception or two to this rule I will mention presently. Let us remember, then, that for all our faith we must have divine authority. Now the Jews had no divine authority for believing that God would appear for them while they were enemies to the Son of God; Cain had no divine authority to believe that God would appear for him while he was a hater of his brother because of his brother's faith. His brother's works were works of faith, and therefore righteous; but Cain's works were works of opposition to that faith, and therefore unrighteous. How was it that the man in hell could not get his petition answered? He prayed for two things, and neither prayer was answered. He prayed that Lazarus might be sent to dip his finger in water to cool the burning tongue of this lost man. Now this man in hell had no divine promise that any water should be sent; he had no divine authority for asking for water to be sent; he had no divine intimation that any water should be sent; and therefore, there being no divine intimation that any water should be sent to hell to quench or lessen his agonies, there being no divine authority, the prayer fell to the ground, and God, as it were, laughed at his calamity, and mocked when his fear came. Ah, lost man, your good things are all gone; you received your good things in your lifetime, and Lazarus his evil things. By what divine authority do you ask even for a drop of water? Well, then, he says, send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren still living, as worldly as I was, faring sumptuously every day, as I did; arrayed in purple and fine linen, as I was; surrounded by every earthly comfort, as I was; glorying in perishable things, as I was; blind, hard-hearted, impenitent, and as far from God as I was. Send one from the dead to them. No; "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." What authority have you, poor lost soul, to ask for God to send one from the dead? What he does he will do by his own word; if there be not virtue, and life, and power, enough in that to save a sinner, neither can the sinner be saved by one being sent from the dead. You will thus see what a solemn matter prayer is. If we are in enmity against God's Christ, against God's truth, against God's grace, we may pray all our lifetime earnestly, nevertheless most erroneously, and be damned to all eternity at last. But I just now suggested that there were apparent exceptions to the rule. You will say, Cain prayed ignorantly. True; but then at the same time with enmity in his heart against the truth. The Jews prayed to God ignorantly, True, but with enmity in their hearts against Christ, without any desire in their hearts to believe in him, or to submit to him. The rich man in hell, say you, prayed ignorantly, in a sense. True, but he had no divine authority for his prayer. Now it may be said here, Well, but may not poor sinners pray ignorantly, and is there no hope for them? Ah, there is a mighty difference between a sinner that is willing to be saved anyhow, so that he may be saved, between a sinner that feels himself utterly

lost, and, though as yet utterly ignorant, wants to know whether the Bible does contain and set forth any instances of such a sinner as that man feels himself to be being saved; there is a mighty difference between such a man and the character I have before described. If you say to such a one, I suppose, then, you would be willing to be saved any way. Yes, any way, if I may but be saved: "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Ah, the eunuch rode along in his chariot; perhaps a very pleasant day, but his mind very unhappy, very dull, very wretched, very miserable, very ignorant, very blind, thinking, Ah, I am reading this blessed book; I wish someone would come and tell me the meaning; I wish someone would come and tell me the way to God, tell me the way out of my lost and ruined condition; how I should be delighted. God prepared the eunuch's heart, as well as prepared the minister. "Understand you what you read?" Ah, that is a question that touches my inmost soul; that is the very thing I have been thinking; that is the very thing I am concerned about; that is the very thing I want to know. That is a feeling Cain never had; that is a feeling the Jews never had, and never will, till God shall change their hearts by his grace; that is a feeling we never had while in a state of nature, and that is a feeling that thousands of professors now never have; they have no desire to know the truth; they will not hear it. High doctrine men are blamed for not preaching to sinners. Sinners will not hear them; and these very men that complain of us for not preaching to sinners do all they can to keep sinners away from us. They hate the light; they fly from us; they give us an evil name, and declare us, like mad dogs, dangerous to everybody. And therefore, while there is a great apparent zeal, there is no such desire as the eunuch had. Now, "Philip began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." in the dignity of his person, in the several relations he bears, and it is clear that he preached the ordinance of baptism to him, as setting forth the death and resurrection of Christ, as setting forth the mighty change wrought by regenerating grace. Did the eunuch say, Well, I have heard of this Jesus of Nazareth, but I don't like him; I have heard being chosen in him, but I don't like that? I have heard something before of the covenant in which the Lord said, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their iniquities will I remember no more." Did the eunuch say, I do not like this? No; but we see that he was glad to be saved anyhow. Anyhow? say you. Yes, anyhow, if he could be saved. I like a man in that position, because, when the great plan of salvation is unfolded to him, Ah, he says, it is a better way than I ever thought; this is an excellent way; oh, this is a suited way; this is a holy way, a merciful way, a righteous way, a delightful way. Ah, see, "Here is water; what does hinder me to be baptized?" His soul fell into the plan of eternal mercy, and he went on his way rejoicing. He had realized something in which to rejoice, for God revealed to him a Savior, and a great one; his soul was delivered, and he went on in the triumphs of the gospel.

I have not grace, or experience, or gifts, or power of speech to set forth, as I could wish, the evil of false doctrine. Oh, my hearer, any doctrine that hardens us against God's truth is what the apostle Peter calls a damnable heresy, bringing in deadly error under the pretension of superior sanctity and holiness. You may depend upon it, that in thousands of cases where there is so much pretension to fleshly sanctity, it is only a cobweb covering for the malice and enmity underneath it. But not so with these Gentiles, these Egyptians. "They shall cry unto the Lord, and he shall send them a Savior." Their enmity was slain; they did not cry in vain; they had divine authority for receiving this Savior; they had divine authority for believing he came to save the lost; they had divine authority for believing in the perfection of Christ, the immutability of the blessed God. "He shall send them a Savior;" that is the first step. Then it is "a great Savior." Oh, how great would his power be in their estimation in the victory he has wrought; how great would his love appear, his grace and mercy; how great his atonement, and how great the glory to which he would ultimately

bring them. "And he shall deliver them." Now, how is it with us as in the sight of God this evening? Do we know what it is to be such poor, lost sinners in our own eyes that we are glad to be saved anyway? And, secondly, are we brought to see that the way of salvation is indeed just to God, safe to man, and everlastingly glorifying to his dear and blessed name? We shall then, indeed, be delighted to find that the way of salvation is superior to any and to everything we once thought of. Oh, how superior! The apostle Paul said, even of the law of God, and it is very strong language, too, because God is the author of the law as well as of the gospel, he said, "It has no glory." Why not, Paul? "By reason of the glory which excels." Bless the Lord, many of us can say that we are brought to see that there is only one way to be saved; we rejoice in the testimony that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved but the name of Jesus.

Now there were five departments which the right-minded Israelite understood in the typical salvation; and let us apply these five departments to the salvation by Jesus Christ. The first would be that of the sovereignty of God: "That you may know how that the Lord does put a difference between Israel and the Egyptians." Is it not so with us? Does not the apostle ask the two questions, "Who makes you to differ? and what have you that you have not received?" Who was it that opened your eyes? Who was it that stopped Saul of Tarsus, and made him to differ from what he was and from others? Who gave us the spirit of grace and supplication? Who brought us under conviction, and made it true of us that was true of Saul of Tarsus, "Behold, he prays?" Now, the right-minded Israelites understood that it was the Lord that made them to differ, it was the Lord that appointed them the paschal lamb, exempted them from the destructive sword. "Thus, says the Lord; the people that were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness." So, we understand this now; therefore, we say, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto your name be all the glory." Why was I made to hear your voice? "You who were dead has he quickened." So that the Lord has dealt with us according to the dear Savior's testimony in the 10th of John; "Other sheep I have, which are not of this" Jewish "fold;" I apprehend that is what he is there speaking of; "them also I must bring." He has brought us by showing us our necessity, and revealing to us the greatness and the adaptability of his salvation. The second department of the typical salvation the right-minded Israelites would recognize would be the greatness of the victory that was wrought in their favor. It said, "He shall send them a savior, and a great one." Moses was a savior, and a great savior, that is, great by the greatness of God; the Lord being with him made him a great savior, so as to save the people from destruction, and to gain the victory; and the right-minded Israelite would recognize the greatness of this victory. Apply this to the salvation of Jesus Christ. There is not anything that my soul more readily recognizes than the greatness of the victory that Christ has wrought, in taking away our sins, in swallowing up death in victory, in bearing the curse, and putting an end to it, delivering us from the wrath to come, bruising the serpent's head, delivering us from all the powers of darkness. Oh, that mighty arm that has gotten him the victory! that mighty arm that divided the sea, the waters of the great deep, and made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over! If the victory Christ wrought be not great in your eyes, then the Lord open your eyes to see that it is great. The song of Moses is great, but the song of the Lamb is greater. They are both put together, because the one is a type of the other; and "they sang the song of Moses and the Lamb." The third department that the right-minded Israelites would understand would be the assurance of their getting through the wilderness. In the 15th of Exodus there is a promise that the dukes of Edom, the mighty men of Moab, all that stood in the way, should be overcome. Well then, says the true Israelite, if that be it, I shall get safely to the Jordan, I shall get safe to the end. So, the Lord teaches his people now the blessed truth that he that has begun the good work will perform

it until the day of Jesus Christ. "I will never leave you nor forsake you." The Lord will perfect that which concerns us. Christ is Emmanuel, God with us, and Christ must cease to be what he is before the Lord will forsake his people. Jesus is the open expression of the mind of God, and Jesus having loved his own loved them unto the end. Well, said the right-minded Israelite, I can see we shall get to the Jordan; but how will it be when we get there? That is the fourth department? Let us hear what Moses said for the comfort of the trembling, but believing Israelite. "Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of your arm they shall be as still as a stone; till your people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which you have purchased." Forty years after that, when they came to the Jordan, was it so? Say you, exactly so, exactly so. Ah, my hearer, several of our friends lately have passed through the Jordan of death; and my soul has sympathized very intensely and very strongly with their spirits in departing from this mortal scene into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Just then, as the Israelites passed over the Jordan in safety and in triumph, so shall every soul thus believing in Jesus fear no evil when it shall pass through the valley of the shadow of death. Well, says the right-minded Israelite, I should like to see something more; I wish Moses had said a little more. Well, brother, he has. What has he said? "You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance; in the place, O Lord, which you have made for you to dwell in; in the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." Thus then, "the Egyptians," the Gentiles, "shall know the Lord."

I must now hasten to the second department, *their consecration to God*, "they shall do sacrifice and oblation; yes, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord and perform it." The sacrifice and oblation here mean in substance the same thing; I shall therefore not attempt to occupy your time in distinctions where there is no material difference. It is a term applied to the various offerings to the Lord, both to offerings where life was taken and to offerings where life was not taken. But we must take the Bible as our guide in this matter of doing sacrifice to the Lord; and the sacrifice here of course means prayer, and praise, and all the service of God. We must take the sacrifices here as we are instructed to take them in the Scriptures; and in these days of Romanism and Puseyism I think it is right that the people of God should be very dearly established in these simple and plain truths. Now, it stands like this; "You also," said the apostle Peter, "are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Hence you read of the sacrifice of praise. These sacrifices and oblations are sometimes called burnt-offerings: 56th of Isaiah, "I will make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar." Here these spiritual sacrifices are called burnt offerings. Now, that scripture in the 22nd Psalm, "You are holy. O you that inhabit the praises of Israel;" you that understand the Hebrew language will know that the original word there translated "praises" signifies "burning," "flashes," and therefore, when these services are called burnt offerings, it denotes the intensity of their prayers and their praises. Again, we read of these sacrifices in the 13th of Hebrews, where the apostle says, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Of course, these things do not merit anything, but the Lord is pleased to attach great importance to them. You know, in the East, in ancient times, when the king used to ride through the villages and see his subjects, he never refused anything they gave him to show their respect for him. Some, perhaps, could find nothing but a handful of grass; well, it was accepted, the humblest thing possible. And just so in the wilderness, the smallest offering the people brought to assist in building the tabernacle was accepted as much as the greatest. Bless the Lord, everything we need for our eternal welfare

is in Christ, but still it is encouraging to serve him in every way he commands and requires; he accepts and honors our humblest services, and hereby he is increasingly endeared to us. So, then the two mites cast into the treasury the Savior saw the greatness of the sacrifice the woman had made; and therefore, recognized the same, and spoke in a way to encourage us to go on to serve the Lord our God.

“Yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord and perform it.” The original word translated “Lord” there is “Jehovah;” “they shall vow a vow unto Jehovah;” to God in the eternity of his love, choice, mercy, and salvation; in the eternity of his triumph and glory. Nothing short of this will do. Why, a gospel that can come to nothing is not God’s gospel; God’s gospel shall not return void, it shall not be sent in vain, no, it shall accomplish that which the Lord pleases, and shall prosper in that unto which he does send it. So, they shall vow a vow unto Jehovah, the Great I AM, who says “I am that I am.” These words will also stand good in this way, “I will be what I will be.” We cannot say that. The Lord says, “I will be what I will be;” will be so and so to my people; I will be that, nothing shall hinder me. Now, these Gentiles shall perform their vow. Time hardly allows me to dwell upon the vow. It is a vow of consecration to God. Now, in the 30th of Numbers, when a wife made a vow, if the husband did not confirm it, the vow was utterly void. And if the church of God, the Lamb’s bride makes a vow that he does not confirm, that vow will stand for nothing. And then if a daughter made a vow, and the father did not confirm it the vow was good for nothing. God is the Father, the Church is the daughter of Zion, and if she makes a vow that he does not authorize and confirm, the vow does not stand good. I will just name two or three vows, and then close. First, one vowed that he would sing of the mercies of the Lord forever. Is this confirmed? Yes, the Lord says, “I will give you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David.” So that I may safely vow a vow that I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever, because here is an everlasting covenant. Then, again, another made this vow: the apostle Paul made a vow that he desired to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and when he came to the end he said, “I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith.” Then in the 26th of Isaiah there is a vow that is very remarkable, avow to exclude all other gods; “O Lord our God, other lords beside you have had dominion over us; but by you only will we make mention of your name.” Why, the people used to make mention of God’s name by Baal and golden calves; and they make mention of God’s name now by the Pope, and some make mention of God’s name by the Church of England Prayer Book, and actually suppose there is some authority in it. So that some make mention of God’s name by one medium, some by another; but, says the Church, “By you only will we make mention of your name;” by your own testimonies concerning your name, what you have said concerning your name. In the 3rd of Exodus the Lord said to Moses, “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;” that is what the Lord says of himself; and so, by him only, only by what he says, will I make mention of him; not by what men say. And the Lord said, “Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me unto you; this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.” Then he was to go to the elders, and say to them, “The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me.” Three times in that same chapter is that repeated. “By you only will we make mention of your name.” Oh, it is good to cleave to God’s own testimony. Let us speak of the Lord by what he himself says of himself; and if he does not know how to speak of himself, then I know not who can. Bless the Lord then for this vow, that we are determined to speak of him by himself only; your own testimony shall be our guide; we will speak of you in no other way. These are they that keep the commandments of God,

reject the commandments of men, hold fast the testimony of Christ, and thus shall prevail at the last.